

Lord's Prayer & Forgiveness

by Rocco A. Errico

Free Us from Our Offenses

WASHBOKLAN KHOBEN: AICANNA DOP KHNAN SHBAKN LKHAYAVEN means "Forgive us our offenses, as we have forgiven our offenders." A literal translation would read: "Free us [from] our offenses as also we have freed our offenders." The word KHOBEN used here means something more than just "debts," as it has been translated in other translations of the Bible. It also means "faults," "mistakes," or "offenses." The word SHBAKN, which has been translated as "forgive," also means "to free," "to untie," "to loosen," or "to release."

Forgiveness Frees Us

Forgiveness frees us from past errors which we have committed, or which have been committed against us, and enables us to start on a new path of life. Genuine forgiveness heals any hurts or wrongs. It strengthens the disheartened soul which has lost its way. It refreshes and renews our hope. It is through forgiveness that we are "born again" and "become like a child." In this way we regain the precious attitude of a willing mind which is ready to learn all over again.

Nature Doesn't Condemn

Jesus was a strong advocate of forgiveness. This is one of the important teachings that make his Gospel so appealing and so powerful. He knew, through his own experiences of life and through his study of the Scriptures, that Nature does not

blame nor "point its finger" when things go wrong. Nature always endeavors to heal or correct an injury or hurt. For example, when I cut my finger, the life forces in my body immediately rush to the aid of the injured area to fight off infection and to start the coagulation of blood to prevent excessive bleeding. The body doesn't attempt to seek out the one who did the damage. Its only interest is to repair the wound. Jesus knew that God is a loving, forgiving Father Who cares for His children. He also knew that forgiveness is the beginning of the rectification of all human mistakes. Blaming doesn't heal anything, but forgiveness does. Our Lord, understanding mankind as he did, made room for human weaknesses and faults, and stressed the need for practicing forgiveness. He knew that forgiveness would restore broken human relationships.

A Two-Way Street

"And free us from our offenses." How we all love this part of the prayer, for we all long to be free of the guilt which accompanies past offenses. But there's a catch to it: "as also we have freed our offenders." How often we seem to overlook this important part! We all want to be freed from our offenses. We also want other people to put up with our shortcomings. But how well do we put up with their shortcomings? In other words, through these words of the prayer we are asking: "Let me experience the same freedom from my offenses as I have allowed others to experience." Let us stop

and think about that for a moment. How many times I have heard people say, "I forgive him," and then a few minutes later they start talking about him again. They haven't released the offense. They're still holding onto it!

When we hold grudges and allow them to build up in our minds, we suffer mentally and physically. We often become unbearable to live with. When we don't forgive others, how can we expect forgiveness to be extended to us? If we become difficult and unforgiving toward others, they will treat us likewise. It is impossible to escape the law of reaping what we have sown. We find that what we really think of ourselves, deep within, is felt by others and reflected back to us as their "impression" of us. It is essential, for our sake and theirs, that we learn to forgive others, and to forgive ourselves as well. It is also interesting to realize that we always keep the "original copy" of whatever we send out to others, be it hate and resentment, or love and forgiveness.

"Wise as Serpents"

This does not mean, however, that we should not be careful of certain people who are determined to do evil. Jesus told his disciples to be "wise as serpents" (See Matthew 10:16). He used this example because he had observed that when a serpent sees trouble coming it gets out of the way; it wants to avoid being stepped on. We should also do this! When we see trouble coming, we should get out of its way; side-step it.

Thus, be wise when you know a person does evil and wishes to hurt. You can forgive him, but stay out of his way lest you get "stepped on." Therefore, be "wise as serpents."

"Pure as Doves"

In the passage just mentioned, Jesus also told his disciples to be "pure as doves." Doves love to go where people are gentle, where people are good. They love to sit on the shoulder of a meek

man. They make their nests in certain homes because they know they will not be mistreated there. They sense it, and the people love to have them nearby.

There's a reference to this phenomenon in the Song of Solomon 2:12:

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of pruning has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land;

In most English translations, "turtle dove" has been wrongly translated as "turtle." This is very misleading, since the "voice" of the turtle cannot be heard. The voice of the turtle dove, however, is a joy to all; hearing it means the doves have built a nest nearby and there is tranquility and peace. When people are upset and there is quarreling in the homes, the doves leave. They become frightened at the vibrations they feel from the trouble in the homes, but when they stay it is a sign of peace and harmony.

If we are to be "pure as doves," then we must have a forgiving but wise heart. We shouldn't remain where there is constant strife or where there are troublemakers. We must be at peace with all and avoid trouble whenever possible.

Self-Forgiveness, Too

But there is something more to consider about forgiveness. Jesus was teaching us here that our own forgiveness comes to us through the act of practicing forgiveness. If we don't forgive others, it's hard for us to forgive ourselves. People who refuse to forgive others usually won't forgive themselves either. But when a person releases others he usually will not hold a grudge against himself.

"Pure in Heart"

These words of the prayer help us to tune in to the needs of others and to our own needs. They help us to clear our minds of hatred and resentment so we may again commune with one

another and with our Father. They help us to purify our minds, for, as Jesus said,

"Blessed are the pure in heart [those who have a clear mind and conscience], for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

The Sixth Attunement

Forgiveness revitalizes our souls and releases the inner tensions and bondages which plague our minds. This attunement would not be complete without the powerful act of forgiveness for

ourselves and for others. This is the sixth attunement.

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